

Defending the Faith: Tomasz Kranz's "Mass Killings by Means of Toxic Gases in the Majdanek Concentration Camp"

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In 2008, supporters of the exterminationist view of National Socialist racial policy held a meeting at Oranienburg near Berlin, the aim of which was to furnish “new evidence” for genocide in gas chambers on a massive scale, a theory that actually has no documentary or material support. A collection of articles edited by Günter Morsch and Bertrand Perz, two undistinguished “Holocaust Scholars”, appeared three years later under the title *Neue Studien zu Nationalsozialistischen Massentötungen durch Giftgas*^[1] (*New Studies on National Socialist Mass Killing by Poison Gas*); it contained the texts of the papers presented at the meeting, presumably edited and extended as is normally the case for such works.

As I write these lines (April 2011), Carlo Mattogno is working on a comprehensive reply to the theses of this collection; in time, his book will be published in Italian and in German. Since we are in the process of preparing a new edition of *Concentration Camp Majdanek. A Historical and Technical Study*, I will use this opportunity to analyze, independently from Mattogno’s future book, the eight-page section of the collection mentioned, written by Tomasz Kranz and titled, “*Massentötungen durch Giftgase im Konzentrationslager Majdanek*”^[2] (*Mass Killings by Means of Toxic Gases at the Majdanek Concentration Camp*).

Kranz, who is the head of the research department of the Majdanek Memorial Institution, had caused a minor sensation in late 2005 when he set the number of victims of the camp at 78,000^[3]—something that amounted to a major reduction of previous figures: shortly after the Soviet capture of the Majdanek camp, a Polish-Soviet commission spoke of 1.5 million people who allegedly died there; later on, official Polish history brought this figure down to 360,000 in 1948 and to 235,000 in 1992. As I have shown in an article published in 2008, Kranz’s figure is still too high by at least 28,000 deaths^[4].

Basically, Kranz’s revised numbers are little but an attempt at limiting the damage to credibility resulting from earlier estimates. He tried to free Majdanek historiography from all its politically useless and immensely exaggerated padding of *non-Jewish* victims while saving, at the same time, the fundamental fallacy that it was an “extermination camp” (the alleged homicidal gassings and a purported mass shooting of Jews on 3 November 1943).

When compared to Kranz’s study of 2005 which, by and large, testifies to a critical spirit in spite of its many obvious trickeries, his contribution to the collection *Neue Studien zu Nationalsozialistischen Tötungen durch Giftgas* constitutes an intellectual and ethical step backwards. Whereas in the 2005 study he did present a somewhat reticent but correct resumé of the revisionist book about Majdanek^[5] by Carlo Mattogno and myself, he here no longer mentions it in any way. Ignoring counter-arguments (known to be) known to him is unmistakable proof of the poverty of scientific support for Kranz’s again-revised position and its ideological agenda.



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Kranz does not shy away from shabby tricks. For example when he states that Heinrich Himmler “on 19 July 1942 ordered an acceleration of the extermination of the Jews in the Government General” (p. 220), he does not provide his readers with any kind of proof for such an order, only reference to a footnote which concerns the creation of a concentration camp for women in Lublin and the transfer of female detainees to the Lublin airfield (footnote 6). But this footnote has no connection whatsoever with the assertion that it is said to corroborate!

Let us take a look at Kranz’s evidence for the existence of homicidal gas chambers at Majdanek. Early into his article, he writes:

“As far as the use of toxic gases for homicidal purposes is concerned, concentration camp Majdanek constitutes a special case in that, here, not only were two toxic gases used as killing agents in gas chambers – the disinfestation agent Zyklon B (HCN) and carbon monoxide (CO) – but there was also a gas-van in operation. ” (p. 219)

Anyone familiar with the official presentation of Majdanek will be surprised to read this. While it is true that the Polish-Soviet commission, in its report of August 1944, mentioned gas-vans operating at Majdanek^[6], this allegation was subsequently dropped by the orthodox historians: the official literature

on the camp speaks only of the stationary homicidal use of Zyklon-B and carbon monoxide. The extent of the evidence concerning the use of gas-vans at the Lublin camp is given by Kranz six pages further on:

“There is *circumstantial evidence* to the effect that a portion of the victims of the Majdanek concentration camp were killed by suffocation in a specially converted van. It is *assumed* that these murders were committed in a disinfection van which belonged to the camp *or* in a gas-van belonging to the commander of the security police and security service at Lublin. *Some detainees claimed* that it operated between the city and the camp.” (p. 225, *my emphasis*).

Thus Kranz, who had asserted at the beginning of his article that “*there was also a gas-van in operation*”, now concedes that there is only “circumstantial evidence” in the form of rumors to substantiate his claim!

Let us now move on to the “stationary gas chambers” in which Jewish detainees were allegedly killed by means of Zyklon-B and/or carbon monoxide. According to the report of the Polish-Soviet commission of August 1944, there were six such chambers:

“Three gas chambers (Nos. I, II and III), located at the northeastern end wall of the bath; one gas chamber (No. IV) immediately adjoining the bath and forming an entire building unit, as seen from the exterior. [...] Two gas chambers (Nos. V and VI), located on the area between compounds 1 and 2.” [7]

The official Majdanek version had yet another gas chamber, not mentioned by the Polish-Soviet commission, besides the six referred to above. It is said to have been a room in the new crematorium.

As opposed to this enumeration, Kranz is satisfied with two gas chambers (chambers I and III of those mentioned by the Polish-Soviet commission); he writes:

“The gas chambers for the murder of the detainees *were* set up in a stone building, the so-called bunker, located behind the bath for men near the camp of the detainees[...] Originally, according to the plan, there were to be two chambers. The chamber in the eastern part (towards the camp of the detainees), however, was split up into two smaller ones one of which was adapted for the use of both Zyklon-B and carbon monoxide, while the other chamber was apparently not used. [...] The large gas chamber, next to the two smaller ones, on the other hand, was adapted solely for the use of carbon monoxide.” (pp. 221f).

Kranz does not offer a reason why it would have been a good thing to split the eastward chamber into two smaller ones and then not use one of them, thus reducing the available space. The reasons why he throws out chambers IV through VII, though unstated, are easy to understand:

- Chamber IV has a window which the victims would have smashed immediately (the blue stains prove that this window existed at the time in question);
- The barrack in which the chambers V and VI are said to have been installed has vanished without a trace – if it ever existed; the Polish Majdanek historians are not even able to show its precise location [8];
- Chamber VII in the new crematorium, claimed to have been used for killings by means of Zyklon-B, does not show any blue stains on its walls, which rules out the use of hydrocyanic acid at this site [9].

Kranz eliminated these “gas chambers”, even though their existence continues to be asserted in the orthodox literature on Majdanek.

On the genesis of the allegation of homicidal gas chambers, Kranz writes:

“Little is known about the installation of the gas chambers at the Majdanek concentration camp, as there are practically no documents dealing with their construction and their operation. All we can say is that the gas chambers were based on the necessary modifications of the technology of disinfestation plants using hydrocyanic acid (hydrocyanic acid is the active ingredient of Zyklon B)” (p. 220)

Kranz’s assertion that there are “*practically no documents*” concerning the construction and operation of the Majdanek gas chambers is not borne out by the facts; there is, on the contrary, a considerable quantity of such documents. Using this evidence, Carlo Mattogno has outlined the construction of such rooms in chapter VI,2 of the book on Majdanek which he wrote with me. However, the documents clearly show that these rooms were hygienic installations for the destruction of vermin, i.e. the very “disinfestation plants using hydrocyanic acid” he speaks about. The fact that hydrocyanic acid was used here can be seen immediately when looking at the quantity of blue stains on all its walls.

It is obvious that for the “*conversion*” of the disinfestation plant into a homicidal one asserted by Kranz there is not even the shadow of any documentary evidence. While it may be conceivable that a disinfestation chamber could have been used for homicidal purposes, Mattogno has provided a very detailed demonstration of the fact that this was *not* the case at Majdanek because, for structural reasons, these rooms could not be used for homicidal purposes. If Kranz does not attempt to refute Mattogno’s arguments even though he summarized our book correctly in his article of 2005, it can only mean there is nothing with which to refute in this case.

In view of the complete lack of any documentary evidence of homicidal gassings at Majdanek, the representatives of the official historiography must needs make use of witness statements – but this leads directly to yet another problem: there is not a single witness who provided any kind of precise account of the alleged gassings at Majdanek. This created obvious problems for Józef Marszałek, the former head of the Majdanek Memorial Institution, when he wrote his book on the camp in 1981 and caused him to include an excerpt of Pery Broad’s report on *Auschwitz*, adding merely that the gassings at Majdanek were carried out in an “analogous” manner^[10]! In the absence of any eye-witness of such gassings, Kranz makes use of someone who at least saw the result, i.e. the corpses, and promptly falls foul of anti-factual testimony. The witness in question, a former detainee by the name of Franz A., who was questioned in 1965 during the preparations of the Düsseldorf Majdanek trial in fact made the following statement:

“In two cases I saw how other detainees had to remove the gassed and dead detainees from the gas chamber. The dead were really blue and some of them had to be torn from one another by the detainee command, as many detainees were intertwined with one another”. (p. 225)

It is, however, a fact that victims of cyanide do not show a blue but instead a red discoloration of their skin^[11]. Hence, witness Franz A. stated something that he could not possibly have seen and thus did not see.

Such statements by former detainees are made to blacken their former oppressors. This also goes for the statement made by Georg G., a former *Funktionshäftling* (Kapo) who, also in 1965, claimed to have seen how “the detainees were herded into the gas chamber made of stone and were gassed there”.

The confessions made by former members of the SS during later trials in Germany are just as tainted, for different reasons. Kranz quotes one of them on p. 225:

“I once looked into the gas chamber when there were people inside. [...] The people were lying there on the floor. They lay irregularly on top of one another. I think they were naked [...] I was to take a look to see how the gas works. Perschon had asked me to attend the gassing.”

Kranz’s source, in this case, is a book by Dieter Ambach and Thomas Köhler which appeared in 2003 under the title “*Lublin-Majdanek. Das Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager im Spiegel von Zeugenaussagen*” (*Lublin-Majdanek. The Concentration and Extermination Camp in the Light of Witness Statements*). The book does not give the name of the SS man in question which probably means that he was not one of the 15 persons initially indicted at Düsseldorf. It is highly likely that his confession was the result of a deal with the prosecution whereby the man would be spared any further legal problems if he acknowledged the existence of gas chambers and thus contributed to the assembly of the official presentation.

If the confessions during the later trials in Germany lack any credibility, this is all the more true for confessions made during trials before Polish, Soviet or Western courts in the immediate post-war years. It is clear that, at that time, the Poles, the Soviets or the Anglo-Americans were able to extract any kind of confession from any kind of German – be it by direct torture or by other, less-physical, means.

This also applies to the head of the Majdanek technical department, a man by the name of Friedrich W. Ruppert, who asserted that the “selections of the Warsaw Jews for extermination” were based on orders issued by Globocnik who “inspected the camp on a number of occasions and who was particularly interested in the gas chambers”. The fact that Kranz has to take recourse to such dubious confessions, probably extracted under duress, shows the paucity of evidence he was facing.

On the subject of Zyklon-B supplies to the Majdanek camp, he states:

“Numerous documents dealing with the supply of Zyklon B have come down to us. The camp administration ordered the gas from Tesch & Stabenow International Company for the Destruction of Vermin in Hamburg. It was produced by Dessauer Werke für Zucker und Chemische Industrie. The first order for Zyklon B dates from 25 July 1943. [...] The last surviving letter concerning orders for Zyklon B was posted on 3 July 1944, three weeks before the final dissolution of the camp” (p. 223).

On the preceding page, Kranz admits that “the Zyklon supplied to Majdanek was used, as in other concentration camps, for the disinfection of barracks and clothing” (p. 222). In fact, the copious documentation on the supply of Zyklon-B allows us to state beyond any doubt that the product was used for disinfestations and nothing else [\[12\]](#). So what is Kranz trying to prove in the paragraph quoted above?

At the end of his article, Kranz deals with the question of how many persons were gassed at Majdanek and says:

“The sources do not allow us to determine how many of the nearly 80,000 victims of the camp were murdered in gas chambers. An indication is contained only in the statement by Ruppert who estimated the number of gassed to have been 500 to 600 detainees per week in the last quarter of 1942 and the

number of Warsaw Jews murdered in the gas chamber in the spring of 1943 to have amounted to some 4,000 or 5,000 persons" (p. 227).

This would mean that between early October of 1942 (said to have been the start of the gassings) until the end of spring of 1943, some 10 – 12,000 Jews were gassed at Majdanek. The official history maintains that there were three "pure extermination camps" in operation during that period: Treblinka, Sobibor, and (up to November of 1942) Belzec. If we go along with the orthodox historians, the "gas chambers" of Treblinka alone would have allowed the murder of 7,000 people per day [13], which means that the SS could have gassed in the Treblinka "gas chambers" within a day and a half all the Jews allegedly killed at Majdanek over a period of eight months.

Hence, there would have been absolutely no need to build any homicidal gas chambers at Majdanek at all. The bath which allegedly housed the "gas chambers" could be seen by the detainees and thus no gassings could have taken place in secret; otherwise the whole camp would have panicked and the Germans would have had to face a revolt or a mass escape.

As detainees were continually released from Majdanek – the total number of releases amounted to 20,000 [14] - any such information would have spread like wildfire through all of Poland and beyond its borders, something that the Germans clearly would have wanted to avoid.

From whichever point of view one looks at the story of homicidal gassings at Majdanek – whether from a historical, a technical or a logical one – it always turns out to be absurd. Only two types of readers will thus be impressed by Thomas Kranz's kind of deceptive "evidence": the naïve who believe themselves to be reading the study of a serious historian, and committed believers in the Holocaust, who say "my mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts".

Notes:

- [1] Günter Morsch and Bertrand Perz (Eds.), *Neue Studien zu Nationalsozialistischen Massentötungen durch Giftgas. Historische Bedeutung, technische Entwicklung, revisionistische Leugnung*, Metropolis Verlag, Berlin 2011.
- [2] Thomas Kranz, „Massentötungen durch Giftgase im Konzentrationslager Majdanek“, in: *Neue Studien zu Nationalsozialistischen Massentötungen durch Giftgas* (cf. Note 1), p. 219-227.
- [3] T. Kranz, „Ewidency zgonów i śmiertelność więźniów KL Lublin“, *Zeszyty Majdanka*, 25 (2005), p. 7-53.
- [4] Jürgen Graf, „Révision du nombre des victimes à Majdanek“, *Sans Concession*, 42-45 (Septembre-Décembre 2008), p. 27-44. German version: „Zur Revision der Opferzahl von Majdaneki“. <http://juergen-graf.vho.org/articles/index.html>
- [5] Jürgen Graf und Carlo Mattogno, *KL Majdanek. Eine historische und wissenschaftliche Studie*, Castle Hill Publisher, Hastings 1999. English translation: *Concentration camp Majdanek. A historical and technical study*, Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago 2003.

- [6] J. Graf and C. Mattogno, loc.cit. (note 5), chapter VII, 2.
- [7] Ibid., chapter VI, 1.
- [8] Majdanek historian Czesław Racja writes that the building housing these chambers was “probably” located on the intermediate field no. 1. C. Rajca, „Exterminacja bezpośrednia”, in: Tadeusz Mencel (Ed.), *Majdanek 1941-1944*, Lublin 1991, p. 270.
- [9] J. Graf, C. Mattogno, loc.cit. (cf. note 5), chapter VI, 3.
- [10] Józef Marszałek, *Majdanek, The Concentration Camp in Lublin*, Warsaw 1986, p. 141.
- [11] Germar Rudolf, *The Rudolf Report*, Chicago 2003, chapter 7.1.
- [12] J. Graf and C. Mattogno, loc.cit. (note 5), chapter 8.
- [13] In his standard treatise about the camps of Aktion Reinhardt, Yitzak Arad writes that a total of 491,000 Jews were gassed at Treblinka between 23 July and the end of September of 1942, i.e. 7,014 or roughly 7,000 per day. Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987, pp. 392-395.
- [14] Anna Wiśniewska and Czesław Raja, *Majdanek, Lubelski obóz koncentracyjny*, Lublin 1996, p. 32.

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